

29 October 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Operations

FROM: DDO Secretarial/Clerical Advisory Group

SUBJECT: Secretarial Survey

REFERENCES: A. Your Memorandum to C/PS, dated
7 October 1975, Same Subject
B. Memorandum for C/PS from D/PERS,
dated 25 September 1975, Same Subject

1. In response to your request in Reference A, the following remarks are keyed to Reference B and represent both findings and opinions of the Secretarial/Clerical Advisory Group. Although we have taken into consideration secretarial problems throughout the Agency, we have primarily addressed ourselves to these problems as they relate to secretaries within the DDO.

III. FINDINGS:

A. Position Titles:

The concluding paragraph of the "Secretary Series" in the Civil Service Commission's Position Classification Standards Handbook states:

"In some instances, secretarial positions include duties and responsibilities which are themselves properly classifiable at a grade level higher than the grade which is appropriate for the secretarial work done. Such positions should be classified by reference to other standards which are appropriate for that work...."

If a job title must be changed to effect higher grade classifications, the Agency must adopt proper titles for all secretarial positions, particularly those in the senior rankings. We would recommend titles such as: Secretary-Administrative

(whose duties include the preparation of correspondence/reports relative to administrative matters); Secretary-Operational Support (whose duties include the preparation of correspondence/reports related to operational matters, or the performance of operational support tasks); and, Secretary-Intelligence Assistant (whose duties include the preparation of name traces or other biographic documents). Since these duties are now already performed by a vast majority of our secretaries, the job titles should be changed to more accurately reflect these duties.

B. Position Grades:

(1) Reference B's referral to the "Agency pattern" of grading secretarial positions according to the grades of the supervisory positions is in direct contradiction to the Management Committee's September 1974 decision to discontinue this practice. The Management Committee concluded that this "pattern" would no longer be effective and that secretarial grades would be determined by the actual duties involved, regardless of the supervisory grades.

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(3) The "incidental" citing in Reference B of the additional cost of [] annually which would be incurred as a result of secretarial position upgradings appears to be irrelevant. When this figure is broken down for the DDO, it becomes [] a figure far less than a large portion of our individual Operational Profile renewals require annually. Even if additional costs are required, they should be considered an obligation to be met as they are for other categories of personnel.

(4) With regard to Appendix D of Reference B, which lists reasons for Agency secretarial separations, we disagree with the figures cited by the Office of Personnel. Based on discussions in the past with individuals who were leaving the Agency and who were in the category marked "change of scene," it was found that they did not always give the true reasons for their separations. In a number of cases, they actually left because of advancement opportunities. We also feel that those cases of separation due to "surplus" or "death" should not be included in the overall statistics since such inclusions only serve to decrease the percentages of the other categories.

C. Secretarial Comments/Complaints:

1. Under-Utilization:

While we agree that under-utilization is at times a problem, it is not the case for all senior secretarial positions. This is a supervisory/management problem and should be dealt with accordingly.

2. Promotion Policies:

a. Rapid Promotions:

We agree that in certain cases promotion policies do allow deserving secretaries to advance to the rank of GS-07 relatively quickly, but we also wish to point out that this same policy applies to officers in the more junior ranks from GS-07 to GS-10. The secretarial "frustration" resulting from this stems from the lack of any headroom to advance beyond the GS-07 level and not from a desire to slow down the process of promotion in the lower

ranks. Whereas professional employees can look forward to a continuance of promotions, albeit at a slower pace than in the earlier stages of their careers, secretaries at the GS-07 level have reached a standstill--unless they are among those fortunate enough to obtain one of the very limited senior secretarial positions. How many of our professional employees in comparison to our secretaries must look forward to spending as long as 20 years in grade?

b. Officer vs. Secretarial Promotions:

See preceding paragraph (III.C.2.a.) and V.C. below.

c. Advancement Limitation:

To quote from your memorandum to the Management Committee dated 29 June 1974, Subject: "Agency Senior Secretarial Grades":

"At Headquarters, what is perplexing is how, in good conscience, management can sanction a system which permits the advancement of other supportive specialists, such as Logistics Assistant to GS-09, Supply Assistant to GS-09, Procurement Assistant to GS-09, a Microphotographer to GS-10, a Records Supervisor to GS-10 or an Information Control Specialist to GS-11, while arbitrarily precluding the advancement of 80 per cent of all secretaries beyond GS-07 and of 99 per cent beyond GS-09. It is a paradox that those who provide comparable services directly to our most senior officers, under the most demanding requirements for speed, accuracy, tact, style, and selflessness, are not rated on their merits, with more comparable results."

D. Lack of Interest in Other Career Fields:

We take exception to the implication that secretaries should actively attempt to obtain professional jobs. Why should a senior secretary, who has achieved an excellent reputation in the secretarial field, be forced into changing her employment category simply to be promoted? Secretaries are professionals in their own field, who have trained and worked hard to reach their current ranks. What is the advantage to the DDO in taking an excellent and experienced senior secretary, who not only enjoys but is challenged by the work she is doing, and forcing her to become a mediocre intelligence analyst or reports officer? A secretary should only enter another career field by her own choice and not because it is the only method by which she can advance.

The Office of Personnel statement that "the clerical employee falls within the non-exempt category for overtime purposes under the FLSA" is true, but under Agency regulations professional employees GS-11 and under can receive overtime compensation and do. [redacted] states "Employees GS-11 and below will receive overtime payments. . . for all hours of directed overtime." [redacted] further states "Employees GS-12 through 14. . . may receive overtime payments . . . for directed overtime worked in excess of 48 hours in a given workweek." We would like to point out, in this regard, that overtime is not an issue. Secretaries are concerned with the fact that as a result of limited headroom in the secretarial career field they are not generally paid an appropriate salary for the 40 hours encompassing their regular workweek.

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IV. OTHER CAREER FIELDS AVAILABLE TO SECRETARIES:

See preceding paragraph (III.D.).

We wish to reiterate that the problem at hand is not one of getting secretaries out of their own field and into that of the professionals. What we are concerned with are those professional secretaries who enjoy being secretaries, who excel in their jobs, but who are unable to advance because of extremely limited headroom in secretarial positions. For those secretaries who wish to change their career field, avenues are available for them to do so. However, for those secretaries who wish to advance in their own field, there are few advancement opportunities.

V. COURSES OF ACTION AVAILABLE:

A. See III.B.(1) above. To reiterate: Why must there be a secretarial "pattern" at all? A secretary's grade should be commensurate with her skills and abilities and with the actual duties she is obliged to perform in her particular position.

See III.B.(2) above. To reiterate: Why should Agency secretaries be compared to secretaries of other agencies? The duties of an Agency secretary cannot accurately be compared to the duties of secretaries in other agencies. Further, even if this were to be the case, the comparison scale itself is not an accurate comparison. Duties must be compared to duties, not titles compared to titles. If, however, these comparisons must be made, we cite the following figures compiled from the Department of State, Foreign Service List, February 1974: In all of our overseas Stations, we have only nine positions which are graded higher than GS-08, while foreign service secretaries graded above GS-08 at these posts total 224. We have no positions overseas above the grade of GS-09, while foreign service secretaries at grades FSS-4 (equivalent to GS-10/11) total 60, and those at FSS-3 (equivalent to GS-11/12) total 13.

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See III.B.(3) above. To reiterate: When we are talking about [] secretarial/clerical positions within the DDO alone, is the annual sum [] such an overwhelming issue?

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B. Upgrade Certain Secretarial Positions on an Incumbency Allocation Basis:

We agree that it is unlikely such a limited number of incumbency allocation basis upgradings would have any substantial effect in improving career opportunities. Such career opportunities can only be provided as a result of the actual upgrading of secretarial positions.

C. Extend PRA Promotion Policy to Cover Secretaries:

The practice of granting PRA promotions to professional employees and not to secretarial employees is discriminatory. If this practice cannot be extended to secretaries, it should not be extended to officers. Of course, if there were additional senior secretarial positions above the GS-07 level, secretarial PRA promotions could be handled in the same manner as they are for officers.

The statement in Reference B that senior secretaries reach the top of their grade "20 years or so before retirement" only serves to strengthen the points made in III.C.2.a. above: how many Agency professionals must remain in grade 20 years before they reach retirement age? Secretaries would indeed be fortunate to look forward to retirement "because of age"--knowing that promotions might still be given to them throughout their careers.

D. Make No Change in the Secretarial Title or Grade Pattern but Seek to Improve Agency Practices Regarding the Utilization, Progression, Recognition, and Career Management and Development of Secretaries:

1. Secretarial Utilization and Advancement Opportunities:

We agree that in many instances "supervisors must be encouraged to permit secretaries to use their initiative, exercise judgment, and perform more responsible functions within the context of their current assignments." However, we cannot stress strongly enough that secretaries are secretaries because that is the profession they have chosen. They no more want to change their field than do case officers. Secretaries are professionals. We disagree that it is "in the Agency's best interest" to encourage secretaries to move into the "professional" field, perhaps unenthusiastically. How can it be in the Agency's interests to lose an excellent secretary and perhaps gain only a mediocre "professional" employee; and how can the expense incurred in training replacements be properly justified?

2. Expansion of Formalized Career Service Management of the Secretarial/Clerical Employee Group:

We heartily endorse the formation of a Career Service for secretarial/clerical employees. The formation of such a service is long overdue and while its formation alone would not solve the problems Agency secretaries must cope with, it would certainly be an excellent beginning. Further, in the long run, it might serve to alleviate the current problems wherein secretaries accompany their bosses to new positions (thereby "bumping" someone out of a job) or in cases where secretaries remain in the same position for a number of years and therefore "come with the job."

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2. In reviewing Reference B in general terms, we are puzzled as to how the Office of Personnel came to their conclusions. Specifically, we are interested in learning who "some secretaries" were. Was a random survey of all Agency secretaries conducted? If so, why was the DDO Secretarial/Clerical Advisory Group not consulted? Or was their research perhaps based on a survey within only one Agency component? Knowing how the Office of Personnel arrived at their findings and conclusions would enable us to make more appropriate comments/suggestions.



Acting Chairman
DDO Secretarial/
Clerical Advisory Group

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cc: C/PS

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